BACKGROUNDER 1-0610 APRIL 20, 1976
MARK HOPKINS/LONDON

"MOSCOW AND WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS"

ANNCR:

THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP HAS REACTED TO SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER'S WARNING THAT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN NATO GOVERNMENTS WOULD CHANGE THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. THE SOVIET PARTY NEWSPAPER PRAVDA SAID THE UNITED STATES IS INTERFERING IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND VIOLATING THE THIRTY-FIVE NATION HELSINKI AGREEMENT. VOA EAST EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS HAS TALKED WITH BRITISH EXPERTS ON SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON HOW THE KREMLIN VIEWS WESTERN EUROPE.

VOICE:

BRITISH SOURCES BELIEVE THAT A WEST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT WITH MAJOR COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION COULD BE AS MUCH A PROBLEM FOR THE SOVIET UNION AS SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER SAYS IT COULD BE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND N-A-T-O.

BUT BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMIC EXPERTS ON SOVIET AFFAIRS DO NOT AGREE ENTIRELY. SOME STRESS THE GAINS FOR THE KREMLIN IN, SAY, THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY SHARING POWER OR ASSUMING NEARLY FULL POWER. OTHERS EMPHASIZE THE IMPACT ON SOVIET DOMINATED EASTERN EUROPE.

THE FIRST VIEW GOES LIKE THIS: A LONG-TERM POLICY AIM OF THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN THE BREAKUP OF NATO AND WEAKENING OF AMERICAN INFLUENCE IN EUROPE. THE RISE TO POWER OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNST PARTY COULD BEGIN THAT PROCESS. OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES -- IN FRANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, AND SPAIN -- WOULD BE STRENGTHENED. THE UNITED STATES MIGHT ULTIMATELY HAVE FEW MAJOR ALLIES IN EUROPE -- WEST GERMANY AND BRITAIN.

N-A-T-O COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME INEFFECTIVE AS A MILITARY ALLIANCE.

MOREOVER SOME BRITISH EXPERTS BELIEVE, A WHOLLY OR PARTLY COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN ITALY WOULD AFFECT THE NOW NON-ALIGNED COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA. ONE SOURCE PUT IT -- THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THE SOVIET UNION WANTS TO BRING YUGOSLAVIA BACK INTO THE FOLD.

THE OPPOSING VIEW ARGUES THAT WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES -- ESPECIALLY THE ITALIAN -- CLAIM INDEPENDENCE. THEY SAY THEY SUPPORT CIVIL RIGHTS AND MULTI-PARTY SYSTEMS.

SOME BRITISH EXPERTS THINK THAT A POLITICALLY SUCCESSFUL WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY WITH THESE POLICIES WOULD HAVE A SUBVERSIVE EFFECT IN EASTERN EUROPE. COUNTRIES LIKE POLAND, HUNGARY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA COULD POINT TO A "COMMUNISM WITH A HUMAN FACE" AS EXAMPLES FOR THEIR OWN REFORMS... REFORMS THAT WOULD MAKE THEM LESS DEPENDENT ON THE SOVIET UNION.

THESE EXPERTS THINK THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS POSSIBLE REFORMIST EFFECT, AND FOR THIS REASON MOSCOW DOES NOT GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE.

BRITISH EXPERTS ON SOVIET AFFAIRS FOCUS ON THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE IT'S THE MOST LIKELY NOW TO GAIN IN POWER. ONE SOURCE THINKS THAT MOSCOW IS ALREADY LOOKING FOR A LONG-TERM REPLACEMENT TO ITALIAN PARTY LEADER ENRICO BERLINGUER. OTHER SOURCES THINK THAT THE KREMLIN WOULD TOLERATE EVEN AN INDEPENDENT ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY BECAUSE IT IS BASICALLY COMMUNIST, DESPITE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES.

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